

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

The claims have been amended as follows: Underlines indicate insertions and ~~striketrough~~ indicate deletions.

Listing of claims:

Claims 1-23 (cancelled)

24. (currently amended) A moisture barrier underlayment adapted to be installed on a subfloor to provide a substantially flat and level surface for receiving floor covering, comprising:

_____at least first and second strips of moisture barrier membranes laid down one next to the other in a coplanar relationship, said first and second strips having a thickness W1, ~~and~~ an overlap joint between said first and second strips, said overlap joint having a thickness W2 substantially equal to or less than W1 and providing a free-bump transition between said first and second strips while preventing straight-through moisture infiltration from the subfloor to the floor covering, and

an intermediate layer of substantially rigid floor members adapted to be installed next to one another in a coplanar relationship atop of said strips of moisture barrier membranes,

wherein longitudinal grooves are defined in said floor members to accommodate expansion and contraction movements, and

wherein said longitudinal grooves include peripheral grooves defined along the side edge portions of the floor members to provide flexible abutting fingers between the floor members.-

Claim 25 (cancelled)

26. (currently amended) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim ~~25~~24, wherein said rigid floor members are spaced from one another to accommodate expansion and contraction movements of the floor covering.

27. (currently amended) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim ~~25~~24, wherein said floor members have softened bottom edges to prevent puncturing of the moisture barrier membranes.

28. (original) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim 24, wherein said first and second strips of moisture barrier membrane have adjoining side portions of reduced thicknesses.

Claims 29-31 (cancelled)

32. (currently amended) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim ~~25~~24, wherein spring means are provided between adjacent floor members to accommodate contraction and expansion movements.

Claims 33-43 (cancelled)

44. (new) A moisture barrier underlayment adapted to be installed on a subfloor to provide a substantially flat and level surface for receiving floor covering, comprising:

at least first and second strips of moisture barrier membranes laid down one next to the other in a coplanar relationship, said first and second strips having a thickness W1, and an overlap joint between said first and second strips, said overlap joint having a thickness W2 substantially equal to or less than W1 and providing a free-bump transition between said first and second strips while preventing straight-through moisture infiltration from the subfloor to the floor covering, and

an intermediate layer of substantially rigid floor members adapted to be installed next to one another in a coplanar relationship atop of said strips of moisture barrier membranes,

wherein longitudinal grooves are defined in said floor members to accommodate expansion and contraction movements, and

wherein said longitudinal grooves include side-by-side grooves extending in succession in opposite directions from a top surface and a bottom surface of the floor members to provide a bellows formation in each of said floor members as a intra-floor member expansion/contraction accommodation means.

45. (new) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim 44, wherein said rigid floor members are spaced from one another to accommodate expansion and contraction movements of the floor covering.

46. (new) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim 44, wherein said floor members have softened bottom edges to prevent puncturing of the moisture barrier membranes.

47. (new) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim 44, wherein said first and second strips of moisture barrier membrane have adjoining side portions of reduced thicknesses.

48. (new) A moisture barrier underlayment as defined in claim 44, wherein spring means are provided between adjacent floor members to accommodate contraction and expansion movements.